

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 /090 W  
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R 310837Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BISSAU  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1363  
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
AMEMBASSY PRAIA POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BISSAU 0908

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINR, PU  
SUBJECT: SELECTION OF NEW PRINCIPAL COMMISSIONER, JOAO  
BERNARDO VIEIRA

REF: BISSAU 0853

1. JOAO BERNARDO VIEIRA, COMMISSIONER (MINISTER) OF DEFENSE  
AND COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES OF GUINEA-BISSAU,  
HAS BEEN SELECTED TO REPLACE THE LATE FRANCISCO MENDES  
AS PRINCIPAL COMMISSIONER (PRIME MINISTER). VIEIRA WAS  
INVITED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE TO  
OCCUPY THE OFFICE LEFT VACANT BY MENDES' ACCIDENTAL DEATH  
EARLIER THIS MONTH.

2. VIEIRA WAS ONE OF CANDIDATES MENTIONED REFTTEL WHOSE  
QUALIFICATIONS AND POSITION APPEAR TO BE JUST WHAT  
PAIGC AND GOGB REQUIRE FOR JOB.

3. A TRUE NATIONAL HERO, VIEIRA, WHOSE NOME D'GUERRE  
IS NINO, WAS A MAN OF ACTION DURING THE INDEPENDENCE  
STRUGGLE. APPROXIMATELY 39, HE IS PERHAPS THE MOST  
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PRIMINENT BLACK GUINEAN OF THE WAR YEARS. VIEIRA  
LEFT BISSAU IN 1959 AFTER THE PIDGIGUITI INCIDENT  
AND WAS ONE OF FIRST GUERRILLAS IN FIELD AFTER TRAIN-  
ING IN CONAKRY AND CHINA. FROM 1961-64 HE WAS  
POLITICAL COMMISSIONER IN THE CATIO REGION, IN THE  
SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY. CAPTURED IN 1962,  
HIS SUCCESSFUL ESCAPE AIDED BY HIS COMRADES, FROM

PORTUGUESE CUSTODY ADDED LUSTER TO HIS FAME AS A MAN OF ACTION AND IMPORTANCE TO THE GUINEAN POPULATION. IN 1964, HE ASSUMED COMMAND OF THE SOUTHERN FRONT AND BECAME A MEMBER OF THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE WAR COUNCIL IN 1965 AND IN 1971 TOOK CHARGE OF ALL MILITARY OPERATIONS. AT THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE PAIGC IN 1973 VIEIRA WAS ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE STRUGGLE AND IN SEPTEMBER 1973, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

4. THE ELEVATION OF VIEIRA TO PRINCIPAL COMMISSIONER PLACES A TRULY GUINEAN HERO IN A PROMINENT CIVIL/ POLITICAL POSITION IN THE GOVERNMENT HIERARCHY. WITH HIS WAR BACKGROUND, POPULAR WITH THE ARMED FORCES AND GUINEAN HERITAGE, JOAO BERNARDO VIEIRA APPEARS NOW TO BE IN A POWER POSITION IN GUINEA.

5. ALTHOUGH TRAINED IN CHINA, NANKING MILITARY ACADEMY FOR FIVE MONTHS, AND TRAINING AND VISITS TO THE USSR AND CUBA, VIEIRA HAS ALWAYS BEEN FAITHFUL TO THE PAIGC HIERARCHY, YET THERE WAS AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT IN 1975 THAT HE ENCOURAGED SOME BLACK ARMY OFFICERS TO USE A SHOOTING INCIDENT AS THE OPPORTUNITY TO RID THE COUNTRY OF CAPE VERDEANS. IT IS WELL TO REMEMBER THAT THE

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GOGB ARMED FORCES, LIKE ITS PREDECESSOR PAIGC MILITARY FORCE, ARE PRIMARILY BLACK GUINEANS. ONE OF THE POINTS OF FRICTION DURING THE INDEPENDENCE WAR BETWEEN THE TWO ETHNIC GROUPS WAS OVER THE CAPE VERDEAN DOMINATION OF POLITICAL JOBS AND LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE PAIGC WHILE GUINEANS WERE DOING THE FOOT SOLDIERING AND DYING IN THE FIELD.

6. AS REPORTED REFTTEL, NO ONE IS QUITE SURE OF VIEIRA'S POLITICAL LEANINGS OR THE TRUE ROLE PLAYED BY HIS PREDECESSOR MENDES, BUT VIEIRA (A CERTIFIED BLOOD AND THUNDER HERO) HAS THE MANPOWER TO MAKE HIS ARGUMENTS AT LEAST HEARD IN FUTURE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY DELIBERATIONS.

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SELECTION OF NEW PRINCIPAL COMMISSIONER, JOAO BERNARDO VIEIRA  
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